

**CORRECT ORTHOGRAPHY FOR *ASTER ONTARIONIS* VAR. *GLABRATUS*
WHEN TREATED AS *SYMPHYOTRICHUM* (ASTERACEAE: ASTEREA)**

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ABSTRACT

Aster ontarionis Wiegand var. *glabratus* Semple (Compositae) was recently provided with a new, formal combination under *Symphyotrichum* by L. Brouillet & J. Labrecque. The specific and varietal epithets were, however, presented in incorrect form. The correct orthography is briefly presented here with its rationale.

KEY WORDS: *Aster*, Asteraceae, Astereae, Compositae, nomenclature, northeastern North America, orthography, *Symphyotrichum*

Recently, Luc Brouillet and Jacques Labrecque (1997) provided a small number of new combinations for *Aster* taxa under the generic name *Symphyotrichum* (Asteraceae: Astereae). These new combinations were presented to account for a few taxa which had not received new combinations when Guy Nesom published his outstanding taxonomic review of the genus *Aster* (1994). My purpose in this brief note is simply to correct the orthography of the one or two relevant entities prior to potential use, in incorrect form, in subsequent treatments or publications. It also provides me a cheap opportunity to try to clarify a Latin construction, as I attempted to do a few years ago in the case of masculine first declension substantives when used as genitive infrageneric epithets (Ross 1991).

In their article, Brouillet & Labrecque presented the new combination for *Aster ontarionis* Wiegand var. *glabratus* Semple as:

“*Symphyotrichum ontarione* (Wiegand) Nesom
var. *glabratus* (Semple) Brouillet & Bouchard, *comb. nov.*”

However, within the confines of this nomenclatural combination, both the specific and varietal epithets are orthographically incorrect. I note here that the specific epithet was

first presented incorrectly when Nesom provided the new combination in *Symphotrichum* (1994, pp. 270, 287), and was retained as "*ontarione*" by Brouillet & Labrecque when they provided the new combination for the "*varietas glabratus*." The specific epithet has again appeared incorrectly in a review of taxonomic updates for North American *Aster s.l.* (Nesom 1997, p. 284).

Aster ontarionis is a well-named species, apparently prevalent in the province of Ontario, Canada. Wiegand, in naming the species, *could have* chosen to use the locative case "*ontariensis*" ("hailing from Ontario") as the specific epithet. However, he chose instead to use the genitive case (generally denoting possession, or belonging), treating "Ontario" as a third declension noun as would have been obvious to any good ancient Roman. Latin third declension substantives are among the most confusing to non-Latin readers and writers, owing perhaps to the fact that they encompass a diversity of less frequently encountered word forms, some of them even requiring vowel shifts within the root-word when the case is changed (e.g., *homo*, *hominis*—"a/the man, of a/the man": *homin-* being the root to which case endings are added). In many other third declension substantives ending in *-o* or *-on*, however, the actual root of the word is considered to end in *-on*, without any intrinsic vowel shifts. As a correlative example, I give the Latin word for "nation," which—as the direct, original basis for the English word—is "*natio, nationis*." Here, as in "Ontario," there is no intrinsic vowel shift within the root-word. Consequently, suffixes denoting other cases are appended to the *-on* terminus, even if the substantive in the nominative case ends only in *-o*.

For example, if I acquired a *Mammillaria* that I thought was *quite* distinctive (--whether or not I knew *anything* about nipple-cacti--), and I wanted to name it for my friend Otto von Schmegdorffen, from whom I had received it, I might describe it as *Mammillaria ottonis*. The epithet "*ottonis*" means literally "of Otto," or, "Otto's *Mammillaria*." Likewise, if my friend Tom Petersson brought me a top-snatch of an *Erodium* from his weedy backyard in Hollywood, and I decided that it was an undescribed species, I might formally write it up as "*Erodium peterssonis*," or, literally "Petersson's *Erodium*." The *-is* ending appended to the root-word is strictly genitive in meaning.

While a few case endings differ in the third declension between neuter forms and masculine or feminine forms, as a general rule the genitive case ends in *-is* regardless of gender. In the case of "*Ontario, Ontarionis*," the genitive form of the specific epithet remains "*ontarionis*" regardless of the gender of the genus to which it is appended. By changing "*ontarionis*" to "*ontarione*," the substantive is completely changed from the genitive case (correct), with the meaning of "belonging to," to the ablative case (incorrect), with several very different meanings. My suspicion is that the basis for this error was in misinterpreting the *-is* ending as an adjectival suffix of two endings: "*-is*" for masculine and feminine; "*-e*" for neuter. *Ontario* is, however, a substantive and not an adjective. As such, the specific epithet should be maintained as "*ontarionis*" whether the species is treated within *Aster* (masculine) or *Symphotrichum* (neuter).

Secondly, in formalizing the new combination for *Aster ontarionis* var. *glabratus* as a *Symphotrichum*, Brouillet & Labrecque published the varietal name as "*glabratus*." This does not require much comment other than to point out that the descriptive varietal epithet for this glabrate, shoreline form of the species is, in Latin,

an adjective of three endings (*glabrata* [f.], *glabratus* [m.], *glabratum* [n.]). As such, the correct name for *Aster ontarionis* var. *glabratus*, when treated as a *Symphyotrichum*, should have appeared in the Brouillet & Labrecque paper (1997, p. 138) as follows:

Symphyotrichum ontarionis (Wiegand) Nesom var. *glabratum* (Semple) Brouillet & Bouchard, *comb. nov.* BASIONYM: *Aster ontarionis* Wiegand var. *glabratus* Semple, Univ. Waterloo Biol. Ser. 38:60. 1996.

In closing, I would point out that the "authors" of the *International Code of Botanical Nomenclature* (Greuter *et al.* 1994) recommend against the use of infrageneric epithets based on third declension constructions—Chapter VII. Orthography of names and epithets and gender of generic names; Section 1. Orthography of names and epithets; Article 60; Recommendation 60C.2 [*pro parte*]: ". . . Treating modern names as if they were in third declension should be avoided (e.g. *munronis* from Munro, *richardsonis* from Richardson)." I, however, find such a formal recommendation to be groundless, unnecessary, arbitrary, and absurd. Yes, Botanical Latin is evolving independently of Classical Latin, but that provides no justification for discarding proper (*i.e.*, correct) Latin constructions for some *oversimplified, anglicized, (-indeed Americanized)* version of what Latin *should* be.

[In such efforts to try and emend Latin-based errors, I am humbled—especially considering the paucity of my own education in Latin. Nevertheless, I ally myself with a largely paranational body of botanists (speaking from an *Americocentric* standpoint) who believe that Latin should be retained as the formal language of botany. Some of the rationales for my viewpoint may—possibly—be found in print elsewhere (assuming that they are not censored).]

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